

(as Mansfield says somewhere) "his dark self was not," no more fascinating, more inspiring, person can be imagined. With him the air seemed turned to oxygen, everything was more brilliant, more beautiful, more interesting, than one had ever dreamed—and that gift of intense perception and the power to interpret it in words are Lawrence's great gift to us all. They talk of Henry James. God's truth—forgive an old private soldier—he is the dearest dead mutton beside Lawrence. Two years after the beating of Frieda scene, Katherine Mansfield saw Lawrence in London and wrote:

... the dove brooded over him too. I loved him. He was just his old, merry, rich self, laughing, describing things, giving you pictures, full of

enthusiasm and joy in a future where we all become "vagabonds." . . . Oh, there is something so lovable about him and his eagerness, his passionate eagerness for life—that is what one loves so.

And to conclude a most inadequate reply to a most foolish attack, let me end with a line or two from his own Lady C., Frieda:

His love wiped out all my shames and inhibitions, the failures and miseries of my past. He made me new and fresh, that I might live freely and lightly as a bird. He fought for the liberty of my being, and won.

As for Miss Porter, I think she has richly earned a salute of twenty-one mews, which is hereby conferred on her.

*Richard Aldington*

## A Matter of Fundamentals

*Letter from New York — By IRVING KRISTOL*

To appreciate the extent to which there really is a "crisis in American foreign policy," and moreover not merely a crisis in management but in basic preconceptions, one has only to ask a question: on what grounds could the U.S. Government object to the idea that all nations should possess their own stock of H-bombs? That such a state of affairs would be undesirable, even disastrous, we all know without further argument. Yet the fact is that this conclusion cannot be derived from the declared principles of American foreign policy, no matter how objectively and exhaustively these are catalogued. On the contrary: one could only infer its opposite—that the perfectly fair and equitable arrangement consistent with the "right" of small nations to defend themselves against "aggression" would be a general distribution of H-bombs throughout the world. The United States is not objecting to France's manufacturing one; it could not reasonably object to Sweden or South Africa or Israel doing likewise. Yet the prospect correctly dismays the State Department, to say nothing of the Pentagon. Clearly something is wrong—and profoundly wrong.

Two recent books\* try, in their own way, to

get to the root of the matter. Both have provoked considerable discussion among the policy-makers and the policy-shapers. Both are written by men who hold prominent positions in the Luce publications—Mr. Emmet Hughes directs *Time-Life's* Foreign News Service, Mr. Max Ways is a senior editor on *Fortune*. Both have had an opportunity to observe closely the way in which American foreign policy is made—Mr. Hughes as a speech-writer on foreign affairs for the White House, Mr. Ways as a former National Affairs editor of *Time* and head of that magazine's London bureau. Both are intelligent, well-informed, and vigorous critics of the present condition of American policy. Many of their criticisms and recommendations overlap; they disagree only on fundamentals.

MOST OF THE SUBSTANCE of Mr. Hughes' critique will be familiar to those who have followed the writings of George Kennan, Walter Lippmann, and Hans Morgenthau; but the passionate eloquence with which it is expressed, the dazzling pyrotechnics of his style (which occasionally blinded this reader), and the moral urgency of his tone give their arguments a new edge. Moreover, in view of Mr. Hughes' past connection with the Eisenhower Administration, his judgment of Mr. Dulles' foreign policy naturally carries a more than ordinary weight. That judg-

\* *America the Vincible*. By EMMET JOHN HUGHES. (Doubleday). *Beyond Survival*. By MAX WAYS. (Harpers).

ment is unmitigated in its severity. "The voice of the political Jabberwock" and the "sing-song of sophistry" are not untypical phrases applied by Mr. Hughes to such phenomena as Mr. Dulles' claim that the Soviet withdrawal from Austria was a "roll-back" due to the "moral pressure" of the United States, or to the statement by Vice-President Nixon (in a speech written by Mr. Dulles) that the American position on Suez was the equivalent of "a new Declaration of Independence." The "great debate" which Mr. Dulles announced he was opening in 1952 was "phoney," as was the "new policy" he loudly proclaimed—it was not new, and it was hardly deserving of being called a policy.

But Mr. Hughes' polemic is not *ad hominem*. He believes that the sorry performance of the past decade has its sources deep in American attitudes; that there is little reason to think a Democratic administration would have done much better; that it was less the men and their specific judgments that were at fault than the whole historic drift of American foreign policy.

The illusions that America has cherished, these unavailing years, have not been mere lapses of logic. They have not been slips of the tongue. They have been accents natural and true to the deliberate speech of the nation.

Indeed, Mr. Hughes sees the entire history of his country as a standing "invitation to illusion," so far as foreign policy is concerned. The hasty demobilisation after World War II was no unprecedented accident: in 1783, with victory in the War of Independence assured, the Continental Congress reduced the U.S. Army to a strength of eighty privates, assigned as watchmen at Fort Pitt and West Point. War was war, peace was peace, and nothing lay in between. Nor did America's experience in territorial expansion, at the expense of a small number of native Indians, prepare her for an understanding of the problems of colonialism and empire.

We won a continent—without meeting the great conflicts, the harsh decisions, the delicate choices, attending almost all imperial adventure. . . . We, as a people, missed most of the education of a great nation.

Things came too easily to America: and her good fortune bred bad habits of mind. Especially did it encourage Americans to confuse private morality with public policy, and to imagine that the amiability, the gregariousness, the neighbourliness of "our town" could adequately supply principles of international action. Americans were (and are) loath to face squarely up to the harsh fact that the world was not made in the American image, and that if Americans

were to act responsibly in this larger world they would have to act differently from what seemed "natural." Instead, they insisted on coating this reality with a sickly veneer of pretence. When, for instance, in 1953 the U.S. negotiated an agreement with the Spanish Government, whereby it paid dollars in exchange for military bases, the agreement described the two signatories as "recognising . . . individual liberty, free institutions . . . a free economy." That this was hypocrisy is less to be deplored than that it was not even cynical hypocrisy. The American idea of an alliance prescribed that it was to be made up of "peace-loving" and "freedom-loving" nations. Rather than re-examine this idea, the State Department blandly denied the reality. And this particular case, of course, only stands for innumerable others.

Mr. Hughes describes five American myths which, he feels, are crippling American foreign policy:

1. A free society assures strength, while tyranny is a sign of weakness—"time is on our side." The most important consequence of this belief is that public opinion makes it almost impossible to execute the urgent and drastic things that need to be done unless a spirit of alarm and hysteria is artificially generated—and this spirit, unhappily, while making action possible, also makes it likely that it will not be wise and prudent action.

2. Economic progress assures political stability—hence there has developed an ideology of foreign aid which pretends to have the master key to international problems, a key that is all the more bewitching in that it costs only money.

3. Any division between nations must be a division between good and evil, while any alliance among nations must have, not only a common policy, but also a common conscience. Thus, any country that agrees to sign one of the countless international pacts generated by American diplomacy is automatically incorporated into the "free world." Those, on the other hand, who fail to do so reveal a moral deficiency, as Mr. Dulles used to explain time and again at his press conferences.

4. All peoples and all nations are essentially alike and essentially equal. This thesis dominates the American attitude towards the United Nations, and helps explain why she keeps trying to build up the authority of the Assembly at the expense of the Security Council—something she will one of these days have cause to regret. It also helps explain American incapacity to face up to the problem of a dispersal of H-bombs all over the globe, as well as her marked reluctance to provide leadership in policy to her allies.

5. Secret diplomatic negotiations are, like secret assignments, immoral and conducive to no

good end. Hence the American shyness to attend a summit meeting—or any number of summit meetings—with Russia. Behind this reluctance is a fear of facing up to the disagreeable realities of America's international power position. Rather than have to submit to the task of squaring her commitments with her power, she prefers simply to commit herself to the ideal and trust in providence to bring it about.

Beneath these various myths, Mr. Hughes sees one original error, a sin of pride. Because America is an integral and vital part of Western civilisation, and has obligations to that civilisation, there is a tendency to identify America with it, to try to speak authoritatively in its name, and ultimately to try to impose its values on the entire world. Such an enterprise, Mr. Hughes asserts, is quixotic, and is bound to proceed from failure to failure, eventually to doom.

Thus Mr. Hughes, in a plea for America's coming-of-age. And now to Mr. Ways, whose fear is of American decadence, a failure to be true to its original and deepest self.

THE one situation in which a man cannot learn from experience is where he does not understand what he was trying to do." And that, according to Mr. Ways, is the case with American foreign policy. He is, moreover, able to make his charge stick by pointing to the fact that, in the immediate post-war years, when Russia had no atom-bomb, the American power position was far stronger than it is ever likely to be again. At present, in the shadow of the Sputniks, the Administration is trying desperately to restore as much of this position as it can. But to what end? The U.S. was not able, when it was really possible to "negotiate from strength," to prevent Czechoslovakia and China from coming under Communist domination. Nor could it then wring any significant concessions from the Soviet rulers. Power itself is no better than weakness, if one does not have a clear idea of how that power ought to be used.

What, Mr. Ways enquires, is the "central purpose" of American action in the world? The two customary replies are couched in terms of either (1) survival or (2) national interest. He has little difficulty in demonstrating that both are disingenuous. America's actions in South Korea, Berlin, and Lebanon were patently not necessary for her "survival as a nation," even if she had to pretend they were. That South Korea is not Communist makes as little difference to the chances for American survival as the fact that North Korea is. The true motives were not so egoistic, but Americans had not the words for them. Similarly, the idea of "national interest" is derived from a false analogy with the status of Great Britain as a world power in

the 19th century. Britain *did* have world-wide commercial and economic interests, crucial to her national well-being, and which did shape her policy. Twentieth-century America is in no such situation: acting the world power is for her a burden not a privilege. Yet Secretaries of State will solemnly inform Congress that it is "in our national interest" to help build schools in India or Ghana, eradicate locusts in Arabia, subsidise commissaries for tin miners in Bolivia, have a display of modern painting in Moscow, or put on a jazz concert in Copenhagen—in short, to do anything a Secretary of State wants to do. The result is that America is continually discrediting herself before the world. Most Americans comprehend dimly that on such occasions the term "national interest" is being used as a substitute for goals and purposes that recommend themselves, for various reasons. But the rest of the world is only too ready to take the Secretary of State at his literal word, and to impute to him a selfish cunning that he had himself dishonestly laid claim to.

To a large extent, this confusion about America's own motives is a reaction to the kind of naïve crusading idealism that led Woodrow Wilson to his fiasco. Mr. Ways, though no crusader, thinks the American people *are* committed to the Wilsonian formula—"to make the world safe for democracy"—understanding this to mean, not dramatically converting the world to democratic beliefs, or imposing by fiat democratic institutions all over, but that it is America's overriding duty to assist and encourage all peoples to govern themselves under free institutions. This is the moral principle of American foreign policy. Any attempt to eliminate or ignore it, can lead only to self-contradiction. For this principle is inherent in the very nature of the American democracy. If foreign policy is to be judged (as it must) by public opinion, this can have reference only to its moral dimension—the people are not in a position intelligently to analyse the intricacies of military technology or economic development, whereas they can (or so the American system assumes) take a fair reading of this policy's more general aspects, and especially can express its opinion as to whether it is "in the American grain." It is absurd to ask the public to do more; it is folly to ask it to do less.

It is true that the fighting of World War I in the name of high moral purpose led to public disillusionment and cynicism—that was a failure of utopian leadership. But it is also true that the fighting of the Korean War in the name of no purpose at all led ultimately to public demoralisation. Opinion outside the United States—even informed opinion—has not yet grasped the import of this last experience. The Korean War was

unpopular to a degree that makes it inconceivable for any future Administration to contemplate that kind of limited, rigorously defensive military action. The scholars and the diplomats can continue to devise ingenious gradients of warfare, countering each enemy action with just so much (and no more) reaction. But they are indulging in a paper game. The American people cannot provide the kind of mercenary, professional soldiers such plans require.

THE real problem, Mr. Ways insists, is not the American mixture of morals and politics. It is the establishing of their valid connection. In order simply to divorce morals from foreign policy, and to gain the freedom of action that some academic critics would wish, the Declaration of Independence would have to be suppressed, the Constitution abrogated, and the "American way of life" miraculously transformed into something else. Mr. Ways is therefore sharply critical of any attempt to "professionalise" American foreign policy, in the sense of leaving it to the diplomats to accomplish what they think it is within our means to do, unharried by public opinion. Not only is this impossible. It is, within the framework of American democracy, undesirable. The "reasonableness" of the professional diplomat too often signifies, first estimating what can be done, and then setting this up as our goal. This procedure is as irrational in diplomacy as in war. The whole precedes the part, and it is not really possible to decide what is a reasonable accommodation between ends and means without first having given thought to the ends themselves. One cannot even properly estimate what is "within our means" unless one has joined this measure to our ends. And to fix these ends is, according to American democratic doctrine, the responsibility of public opinion—or, to be more precise, what Mr. Ways called the "public philosophy."

Mr. Ways does not mean by this term what Mr. Lippmann did, in his book of that title. He is not referring to the underlying metaphysical presuppositions of a society, but rather to the intermediary layer of opinion that coherently links these suppositions to effective political action. For example, it is now a doctrine within the American public philosophy that the use of military force in international affairs is justified only when "aggression," narrowly defined, has occurred. Our posture is wholly defensive; and this thesis defines the conditions of defensive action. A moral inhibition is laid upon our political movement. But, unfortunately, no moral purpose is set before this movement; while a merely tactical purpose turns out in the end to be intolerably frustrating. Not only

is the inhibition itself unduly constrictive (as the desperate invention of the notion of "indirect aggression" indicates); it can also be at the moment of action, unduly permissive. Once "aggression" has occurred, there are no moral limits to how one can react—one is free to wage "unconditional warfare," to engage in "massive retaliation." The morality is located only in the inhibition on action; it is not wedded to the purpose of action. The result is the present American military establishment, competent to destroy the civilised world, and not competent to do much else.

Mr. Ways finds the American public philosophy to be in a condition of grave deterioration. For this he blames "positivism"—a state of mind that denies the existence of objective morals and legal norms, diligently destroys all efforts at defining them, and thereby makes it impossible for America to conceive of its own political rôle in other than the most narrow terms. Such a conception is not only incongruent with America's finest sensibilities. It is utterly inadequate to the world's dilemmas and the world's longings. What the world needs at this time is a system of order within which the 20th-century technological revolution can take place without making life intolerable in its anxieties, its complexities, its miseries. Communism does propose such a system—an inhuman system, true, but one that human beings will prefer to no system at all. The success of Communist foreign policy since the war does not derive from any diabolical cleverness on its part, or from any supposed advantages that despotism has over popular government. The Communists have been more successful because they have a clear idea of what kind of world they want to construct. In contrast the United States is infirm of purpose—and by that very fact contributes in a major way to the world's instability.

It is important to emphasise that Mr. Ways does not advocate the artificial manufacture of an "ideology" that would "help win the Cold War." He believes America already has, not an ideology, but an idea. This is the idea of strong but limited government, in which freedom and order, liberty and justice, are reconciled within the framework of representative institutions. The "self-evident truths" on which the American government was established have their roots in two thousand years or more of Western civilisation. They are not uniquely American; America does not possess them so much as they possess her. She cannot export them like so many commodities, but if she actually does believe them to be *true*, they must form the guide of American policy, external as well as internal. Such a guide would assist in building genuine international institutions of order with those of her allies



who also share these truths, instead of dissipating her purpose by vague generalities at the sessions of the United Nations. It could enable her rationally to allocate foreign aid appropriations and to be candid as to their intentions—something she is not now able to do. It could permit her to bring her military policy under sensible control, replacing the notion of “massive retaliation” by a military doctrine that allowed for American initiative in specific, limited circumstances. Above all, it would provide American diplomacy with a form, a meaning, a purpose.

HERE, then, is a pointed and poignant anti-thesis. In effect, Mr. Hughes is demanding that the American republic learn to manage its foreign affairs according to the rules by which all nations have in the past survived the perils of international lawlessness. That there are such general rules, that there exists a *sagesse des nations* available to all, is his major assumption. What America must learn, he insists, is sophistication. To which Mr. Ways retorts that such “sophistication” corrupts, that it is not possible to govern one’s domestic affairs according to “self-evident truths” while constructing one’s foreign policy on the premises of *Realpolitik*, that unless public morality can define and defend foreign policy, Americans will at best be in a position where this morality will serve—as it does to-day—only to frustrate policy.

The fact that Mr. Hughes and Mr. Ways clearly agree (as intelligent men will) on many specific points cannot obscure the fact that there is a profound opposition between them. To British and European ears, the terms of this opposition will inevitably sound more than a little odd. But that is because foreign policy has, in these older nations, traditionally been a dynastic prerogative, while the reigning “public philosophy” has had only a tenuous connection with popular opinion. Yet this traditional attitude is changing; it may even have died, its tombstone bearing the inscription, “Suez.” In any case, there is every reason to think that this American debate has a more than parochial significance; and that it is “American” only to the extent that it is in America that the ultimate political decisions are now being most nakedly confronted.

This debate has a general meaning for another reason. For it is not only American actions that affect the course of world affairs; it is also *the kind of America* that takes these actions which counts. The pre-eminent virtue of this little collision between two books is to reveal that the crisis in American foreign policy is a crisis in American self-consciousness, in American self-definition. There can be no debate on

American foreign policy that is not also a discussion of the essentials of American democracy itself. What America does will be mainly determined by what America is. And what America is, of course, will be determined by what she does.

## The Reichstag Fire

ORWELL had his forebodings about totalitarian success in re-writing history (“lies becoming the truth”), but history has many cunning passages. The West German weekly *Der Spiegel* has been running an important and fascinating series of articles over the past couple of months on the subject of the *Reichstag* Fire of 1933. These articles are based, it appears, on an unpublished private investigation into the circumstances of the fire, undertaken by a certain Herr Fritz Tobias, an elderly civil servant now living in Hanover. Herr Tobias, himself a victim of Nazism after 1933, evidently set out with the firm intention of establishing Nazi complicity in the affair. He re-sifted, with German *gründlichkeit*, the entire literature relating to the Fire, and managed to contact many of the surviving witnesses. To his astonishment, he discovered that the evidence pointed to an explanation of the whole affair, so simple, that nobody seems to have thought of it. He suggests we accept Van der Lubbe’s confession, to which he stuck throughout the trial, that *he* had set fire to the *Reichstag*—alone and unabettled.

If this version should come to be accepted (and West German historians like Professor Theodor Eschenburg, and Dr. Hoch of the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte* in Munich, seem disposed to take it seriously) a certain amount of re-writing of history will be required. *Der Spiegel* points out, not without *schadenfreude*, that a great many historians, Alan Bullock among them, have adopted the older version in a surprisingly uncritical spirit. Actually, though Alan Bullock ascribes the planning of the operation to Goering and Goebbels, and its execution to the Berlin SA leader Karl Ernst, he does confess “. . . there are unsolved riddles in the history of that night” (*Hitler, A Study in Tyranny*, p. 237). Others have been less cautious, and *Der Spiegel* is able to quote a long list of West German school and university text-books in which it is stated categorically that the Fire was “the work of the SA.” Indeed, for all practical purposes the story of the “doped,” “cretinous,” “homosexual,” “Nazi creature” Van der Lubbe, and of the mysterious underground passage leading to Goering’s residence, has simply “become the